HAYAT AN NABI

(THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD IS ALIVE)

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:154): "And do not say about those who are killed in the way of Allah, 'They are dead.' Rather, they are alive, but you perceive [it] not."

Surah Al-Imran (3:169): "And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision."

1. "I passed by Moses on the night of my Journey near the red mound while he was standing in his grave offering prayer."

(Sahih Muslim)

2. The Prophets are alive in their graves, praying."

Musnad al-Bazzar; Abu Ya'la (Authenticated by several scholars including al-Haythami and al-Albani)

3. Verily, Allah has forbidden the earth to consume the bodies of the Prophets."

(Sunan Abi Dawud; Sunan an-Nasa'i)

4. The Prayer in the Grave: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "The Prophets are alive in their graves and they pray."

(Musnad al-Bazzar; authenticated by Al-Haythami and Al-Albani in Sahih al-Jami').

5. Increase your recitations of Salawat on me on Friday for your Salawat are presented to me." When asked how they are presented after his body has decayed, he replied: "Allah has forbidden the earth from consuming the bodies of the Prophets." (Sunan Abi Dawud, An-Nasa'i).

Imam al Bayhaqi r.a wrote a specific treatise (Hayat al-Anbiya) proving the Prophets are alive after death.

Imam Ibn Hajar asqalani stated in Fath al-Bari that the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) in the grave is a "permanent life" and his death was merely a transition from one state to another.

Imam Jalal Uddin din suyuti asserted that the Prophet (ﷺ) is alive in body and soul, and he exercises a level of awareness of the Ummah's actions.

Imam Ibn Taimiyah said :- Acknowledged that the soul remains connected to the body in the grave and that the Prophet (ﷺ) hears the salutations offered near his grave.

Maulana Qasim Nanotvi (1832–1880), the founder of Darul Uloom Deoband, held a specific and deeply philosophical stance on Hayat un Nabi (the life of the Prophet). His views are primarily detailed in his famous Urdu book, Aab-e-Hayat ("The Water of Life").

Maulana Qasim Nanotvi believed the Prophet (ﷺ) possesses a real,physical life in the grave that is superior to all other creation, characterized by continuous awareness and spiritual activity.

Maulana Qasim Nanotvi's explanations in Aab-e-Hayat are considered some of the most intricate and philosophical works in South Asian Islamic scholarship. He sought to reconcile the Quranic verses regarding death with the Hadith regarding the "Life of the Prophets."

Here is how he addressed these specific points:

1. Explanation of Verse 39:30 ("Indeed, you are to die")

Maulana Nanotvi did not deny that the Prophet (ﷺ) experienced death; rather, he redefined the nature of that death.

Death as a "Veil": He argued that the "death" mentioned in the Quran refers to the Prophet (ﷺ) being hidden from the physical eyes of the world. To the people in this world, he is "dead" because he no longer interacts with them, but in his own reality, he remains alive.

The Linguistic Argument: He pointed out that the Quran says, "You are to die" (using the noun Mayyit), but it does not say the Prophethood dies or the soul's connection to the body is severed. He compared it to a sun that has set: it is "dead" to the people in the night, but it is still "alive" and shining in another realm.

Separation of Laws: He explained that the laws of death (inheritance, end of marriage) were applied to the Prophet (ﷺ) as a formality to fulfill the Sunnah of Allah regarding human mortality, but these physical laws do not negate the internal reality of his continuous life.

2. The Soul Remaining "Inside the Heart"

One of Nanotvi's most unique philosophical contributions is his theory on the location and movement of the Prophet's soul at the time of death.

Concentration vs. Extraction: In ordinary humans, death occurs when the soul is completely extracted from the body. Nanotvi argued that in the case of the Prophet (ﷺ), the soul was not removed from the body, but rather withdrawn from the exterior parts of the body and concentrated within the heart.

The "Core" of Life: He believed the Prophet's (ﷺ) heart remained the "fountainhead" of life. Because the soul stayed within the physical frame (specifically concentrated in the heart), the body remains "alive" in a worldly sense (Dunyawi), even if the outward senses (breathing, speaking to us) are suspended.

Analogy of Sleep: He often used the analogy of a person in a very deep sleep or a coma. To an observer, the person is unresponsive and "dead" to the surroundings, but the soul is still within, maintaining the body's integrity. For the Prophet (ﷺ), this state is even more perfect and permanent.

3. "Dunyawi" vs. "Barzakhi" Life

While most scholars (like the Ahle Hadees) say the Prophet has a Barzakhi life (belonging to the next world), Nanotvi insisted on calling it Haqiqi Dunyawi (Real Worldly Life).

> His Reasoning: If the life was purely Barzakhi, the Prophet (ﷺ) would be no different from any other believer, as all believers have a soul that is "alive" in Barzakh. The distinction of the Prophet (ﷺ) is that his physical body shares in that life because the soul never fully departed from it.

In Aab e Hayat, Maulana Qasim Nanotvi employs deep philosophical analogies to explain how the Prophet (ﷺ) can be "dead" according to worldly observation but "alive" in reality. He also leans heavily into the linguistic nuances of the Quranic text.

1. The Analogy of the Sun and the Soul

Maulana Nanotvi uses the Sun as a primary metaphor to explain how the soul of the Prophet (ﷺ) relates to his body after death.

The Setting Sun: He explains that when the sun sets, it disappears from our horizon. To those in the dark, the sun is "gone" or "dead" in terms of providing light to their specific location. However, the sun itself has not ceased to exist, nor has it lost its heat or light; it is simply shining on a different realm.

The Concentration of Light: He argues that at the time of death, the Prophet's soul (the "Sun") did not leave the "solar system" of his body. Instead, its "rays" were withdrawn from the surface (the limbs and senses) and concentrated into the "core" (the heart).

Visibility vs. Reality: Just as the sun is still the sun even when hidden by clouds or the horizon, the Prophet (ﷺ) remains "The Living Prophet" even when the "cloud" of death veils him from our physical sight. To Nanotvi, the body is like a mirror; even if the mirror is covered, the light reflecting within it (the soul) remains present.

2. Linguistic Analysis: Mayyit vs. Mayyitūn

You asked about the grammar of the words in Surah Az-Zumar (39:30):

إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَإِنَّهُم مَّيِّتُونَ (Innaka mayyitun wa-innahum mayyitūn)

A. The Noun Form (Ism al-Fa'il)

In Arabic grammar, both Mayyit and Mayyitūn are nouns, not verbs.

Verbs (Māta) denote an action that happens at a specific time (e.g., "He died").

Nouns (Mayyit) denote a state or an essential quality.

B. Mayyit (مَيِّت) - Addressing the Prophet

The "Double Ya": The word has a Shaddah (doubling) on the letter Ya. In classical Arabic linguistics, there is a distinction between Mayyit (with a shaddah) and Mayt (without).

The Living-Dead: Mayyit refers to a living being who is destined to die. Allah called the Prophet (ﷺ) Mayyit while he was still alive and active in Madinah.

Nanotvi's Interpretation: He used this to argue that "death" is an inherent attribute of the physical body's journey, but it doesn't describe the end of the soul's connection. By using a noun, Allah is describing a transition of state rather than a total extinction of being.

C. Mayyitūn (مَّيِّتُونَ) - Addressing Humanity

Plurality and Equality: This is the sound masculine plural (Jam' Mudhakkar Salim) of Mayyit.

The Collective Fate: By grouping the Prophet (ﷺ) and the people in the same sentence with the same root word, the Quran emphasizes that the process of dying is a universal human experience.

3. Grammatical Nuance: The Present vs. The Future

Linguistically, using the nominal sentence (Al-Jumlah al-Ismiyyah) starting with Inna indicates Thubut (permanence and certainty).

He argued that since the Prophet (ﷺ) was called Mayyit while he was still alive, the word refers to the physicality of the body, which is mortal. However, the Haqiqah (reality) of the Prophet is his soul, which is "The Water of Life" (Aab-e-Hayat) and remains connected to the heart.

Maulana Nanotvi's unique stance was that while the Prophet (ﷺ) is a Mayyit (one who passed through death), he is simultaneously Hayy (alive) because the soul's concentration in the heart maintains the body's "worldly" integrity in the grave.

Maulana Qasim Nanotvi utilized specific Hadiths and traditional reports to build his philosophical framework. His goal was to prove that the Prophet's (ﷺ) soul behaves differently than that of ordinary humans at the time of death.

1. The Hadith of "Returning the Soul"

The primary Hadith Nanotvi addresses is found in Sunan Abi Dawud:

> "None of you greets me except that Allah returns my soul (radda ilayya ruhi) to me so that I may return his greeting."

Nanotvi's Logic: Most scholars interpret "returns" as the soul coming back from the heavens to the body. However, Nanotvi argues that if the soul were completely absent, the body would be "purely dead" like a stone.

The Concentration Theory: He suggests that the soul is always present in the heart (maintaining the body's freshness), but the "return" mentioned in the Hadith refers to the soul's attention and faculty of speech returning to the exterior senses to respond to the visitor.

2. The Heart as the "Station of the Soul"

Nanotvi leans on the concept that the heart of the Prophet (ﷺ) is unlike any other. He refers to the various "Openings of the Breast" (Shaqq al-Sadr) that occurred during the Prophet's childhood and before the Night Journey.

Spiritual Anatomy: He argues that because the Prophet's heart was purified by angels and filled with Hikmah (wisdom) and Iman (faith) in a physical-spiritual sense, it became a permanent "vessel" for the soul.

Non-Separation: While for an ordinary person the soul is "pulled out" (Naz'a), Nanotvi posits that for the Prophet (ﷺ), the soul was merely "veiled." He argues that the soul's connection to the heart is so strong that it never fully exits the physical frame, thus preserving the body from any decay.

3. Comparison of the Soul's State

To make this easier to visualize, we can compare how Nanotvi views the soul of an ordinary person versus the Prophet (ﷺ) after death:

4. The "Aab-e-Hayat" (Water of Life) Concept

The title of his book itself, Aab-e-Hayat, refers to the spiritual essence that grants immortality.

Nanotvi argues that Knowledge (Ilm) and Prophethood (Nubuwwah) are the "Water of Life."

Since the Prophet (ﷺ) is the source of this "water," his essence cannot be overcome by the "dryness" of death.

Therefore, the soul remains in the heart as a spring that keeps the entire "garden" (the body) green and fresh in the grave.

5. Final Synthesis on 39:30

Returning to the verse "Indeed, you are to die," Nanotvi concludes that this refers to the disappearance of the "Sun" from the horizon of this world.

6. To the World: He is Mayyit (passed away/hidden).

7. In the Grave: He is Hayy (alive), with his soul residing in his heart, engaged in the "worldly" acts of the next realm, such as praying and responding to greetings.

Maulana Qasim Nanotvi uses specific Urdu and Arabic terminology to describe his "Concentration Theory." He connects this directly to the unique nature of the Prophet's (ﷺ) sleep to prove that his "death" was merely a deeper version of that same prophetic sleep.

1. The Arabic/Urdu Terminology for "Concentration"

Maulana Nanotvi describes the movement of the soul not as an exit (Khuruj), but as a withdrawal or a focus.

Inhiraf (انحراف): He uses this to describe the soul "turning away" from the external senses.

Simatna (سمٹنا): An Urdu term he frequently uses, meaning "to shrink back" or "to concentrate." He argues the soul contracts from the skin and limbs into the core.

Markaz (مرکز): He refers to the heart as the Markaz (center/hub). He describes the soul as being "Mutawajja ilal-Batin" (متوجہ الی الباطن)—meaning its "attention is directed entirely toward the internal reality" rather than the external world.

Ittisal (اتصال): He insists that the Ittisal-e-Ruhani (Spiritual Connection) with the body remains Haqiqi (actual/real), even after death.

2. The Philosophy of Sleep: Prophet vs. Common People

Nanotvi uses the famous Hadith to build his argument: "My eyes sleep, but my heart does not sleep" (Sahih Bukhari). He draws a sharp philosophical distinction between the sleep of ordinary humans and that of the Prophet (ﷺ).

A. The Sleep of Common People

For an ordinary person, sleep is a state of Ghaflah (unconsciousness).

When we sleep, our soul's connection to our senses is weakened to the point that our "internal" awareness also shuts down.

Because our hearts "sleep" (become unaware), we lose our state of ritual purity (Wudu), as we are no longer in control of our physical bodies.

B. The Sleep of the Prophet (ﷺ)

Nanotvi argues that the Prophet's (ﷺ) sleep was not a lack of awareness, but a shift in focus.

While his eyes were closed and his limbs were at rest, his soul remained fully active and "awake" within his heart.

The Wudu Argument: Because his heart was awake, he remained in a state of constant awareness of his physical and spiritual condition. Therefore, his Wudu never broke during sleep.

The Analogy to Death: Nanotvi argues that Death for the Prophet (ﷺ) is simply a more profound version of this sleep.

In Sleep, the soul withdraws from the eyes but stays in the heart.

In Death, the soul withdraws from the entire "outward" world (the Dunya) but remains concentrated in the heart.

3. The Logical Conclusion: "The Living Heart"

Nanotvi's masterpiece of logic follows this chain:

Premise 1: The Prophet's (ﷺ) life is centered in his heart, which does not "sleep" (lose awareness).

Premise 2: Sleep is the "sister of death."

Conclusion: If his heart didn't even "sleep" in the worldly sense, it certainly didn't "die" in the worldly sense. The soul merely concentrated itself in that "ever-awake" heart, maintaining the body's life in the grave just as it maintained his Wudu during sleep.

For Nanotvi, the Prophet (ﷺ) is "Daim al-Hayat" (Ever-Living). He treats the grave as a "private chamber" where the Prophet (ﷺ) is resting in a state of high spiritual wakefulness, his soul having never left the "vessel" of his purified heart.

The following scholars are well-known for either claiming such encounters themselves or defending the possibility of meeting the Prophet "in the flesh" while awake:

Imam al-Suyuti (d. 1505): Perhaps the most famous defender of this phenomenon. He wrote a specific treatise titled Tanwir al-Halak fi Imkan Ru'yat al-Nabi wal-Malak (The Illumination of Darkness Regarding the Possibility of Seeing the Prophet and Angels). He claimed to have seen the Prophet over 70 times in a waking state.

Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijani (d. 1815): The founder of the Tijaniyya Sufi order. He based the entire foundation of his spiritual path on direct waking encounters with the Prophet, who he claimed dictated specific litanies (Awrad) to him.

Al-Ghazali (d. 1111): In his Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal (Deliverance from Error), he mentions that Sufis, in their

waking states, witness angels and the spirits of prophets, hearing their voices and gaining benefit from them.

Ibn Arabi (d. 1240): The famous mystic often spoke of "meeting" the spirits of past prophets. He viewed these encounters as taking place in the Alam al-Mithal (the World of Images/Imaginal Realm), which feels as physical and real as our waking world.

Sheikh Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi (d. 1287): A central figure in the Shadhili order who famously said, "If the Messenger of Allah were hidden from me for a single moment, I would not consider myself a Muslim."

*Allama Anwar Shah Kashmiri (d. 1933), the legendary Deobandi scholar and Hadith master, did indeed affirm the possibility of seeing the Prophet Muhammad in a waking state, including the specific nuance of it being with his physical body.

While many scholars view such encounters as purely spiritual or "visionary," Kashmiri was known for his rigorous intellectual defense of the "Physicalist" view within the framework of Hayat al-Anbiya (The Life of the Prophets in their graves).

Anwar Shah Kashmiri's Stance

In his monumental commentary on Sahih al-Bukhari, Fayd al-Bari, he addresses the Hadith: "Whoever sees me in a dream will soon see me while awake." * The Physical Dimension: Kashmiri argued that this "waking vision" is not merely an internal hallucination or a dream-like state. He believed that the Prophet's body is "free" (mutlaq) from the standard physical constraints of the grave, allowing it to manifest in the physical world to certain individuals.

The "Mithali" Body vs. The "Elemental" Body: He often navigated the complex theology that the Prophets possess a life in the Barzakh (the interval between death and resurrection) that is superior to that of martyrs. He posited that they can appear in our world in their "elemental" (physical) bodies, not just a spiritual "image" (Mithal).

Anwar Shah Kashmiri was known as a "Walking Library" and a master of rational sciences. His support for this view added significant weight to it because:

He was a Traditionalist: He wasn't just a mystic; he was a master of Fiqh (law) and Hadith.

Intellectual Rigor: He used complex metaphysical arguments to explain how a body can be in the grave and yet appear elsewhere simultaneously, often drawing on the concept of "Tashakhkhus" (individuation).

Understanding the Nuance

It is important to distinguish between three different perspectives on this:

The Literal Physical Return: Very few scholars believe the Prophet literally leaves his grave in Medina in the same earthly body he died in.

The "Waking Vision" (Yaqazah): Most of the scholars listed above believe the Prophet appears in his "exemplary" or "spiritual" body, which is perceived by the physical eyes of the saint as if he were physically there.

The Orthodox/Majority View: Most jurists and theologians (including figures like Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani) interpret Hadiths about "seeing me while awake" as either referring to seeing him on the Day of Judgment or seeing a true dream that will eventually be interpreted.

The Supporting Hadith

The primary basis for these claims is a Sahih Hadith:

> "Whoever sees me in a dream will see me in a waking state (faqad ra'ani fil-yaqazah), for Satan cannot take my form."

(Sahih Bukhari & Muslim)